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## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

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### THE REGENERATION OF RUSSIA.

THE body politic of the Russian Empire is a synthesis of six widely differing elements—army, clergy, nobility, peasantry, bureaucracy, and Czar—of which the last three only may be said to be factors in the solution of the problem.

To those who have drawn their mental portraits of the Czars from the works of Swinburne and Kennan, the following conception, based upon the history of their policy, will doubtless appear startling and perhaps untrue.

It was the Czars who united the Slavonic tribes, introduced Christianity, enforced commercial intercourse, established schools and universities, waged a war of extermination upon sorcery and superstition, translated the Bible, codified the laws, annihilated the Golden Horde, broke the iron bonds of Tartar tyranny, imported the arts and artists of Italy, the learning of Greece, the mechanics and engineers of Germany, reformed the abuses of the church, humbled the nobility, introduced printing, established markets for transcontinental trade, reclaimed Siberia and would have saved Turkey. They gave freedom and property to 25,000,000 serfs, self-government to the provinces and new charters to the cities, facilitated foreign intercourse and travel, enlarged the freedom of the press, reformed the courts, permitted trial by jury, provided State-paid attorneys for the people, and made Russian influence paramount in Europe.

All this has been accomplished by the Czars despite the antagonism of that powerful party whose blindness and egotism have ever been well expressed in their motto, "*La Russie pour les russes.*" Theoretically beneath the Czar, but practically far more potent and widespread in its influence, this bureaucracy controls all the offices of the empire. This monster of oppression, like the institution of serfdom, was in its inception by Peter the Great in 1722 but another effort of the Czars to benefit the people, by limiting the power of the hereditary nobility, which had been increased rather than diminished by the quite unexpected results of the ukase of Boris I., and to which the abolition of the latter in 1862 gave the death blow.

Oh, the infinite wisdom of Goethe's prayer that we might "comprehend the consequences of things!" Consider the unexpected results of these two reforms. The first, the establishment of the bureaucracy, by binding the husbandman to the soil, annihilated "the people;" the second by humbling the nobility destroyed the balance of political power within the empire. Thus the bureaucracy was left without restraint in the exercise of any policy, however arbitrary, short-sighted, or corrupt, which its origin and desire for political existence might dictate. Hence, in its inception a power-

ful machine for centralization, it now forms a distinct class of individuals knit together by iron bonds of official subordination—an *imperium in imperio*. While seeming to obey the Czar, they hold the real power, and cast the responsibility upon him. They control all the sources of popular education and enlightenment—religion, politics, the schools, the press, the judiciary, the ministry, and all the immense police power of the state.

From thralldom such as this there is but one postern of escape for the Czars. That is by way of the people. That the predecessors of Alexander have been aware of their precarious position is evidenced by their policy. "The Emperor," says Prince Delgoruki, himself a Russian exile, "animated with excellent intentions, wishes for reforms; you (the bureaucracy) put every imaginable obstacle in his way. Take care! Remember that the defenders of old abuses in France, for having hampered and paralyzed in 1789 the good intentions of Louis XVI., that true father of his people, brought on a fearful anarchy of which they were the first victims." Russia is at 1785, approaching 1789. May God save her from '93!

The entire population of Russia is 120,000,000, of whom 100,000,000 are peasants, and may therefore be said to constitute the people on whom rests the financial, military and political future of the state. Though ignorant, poverty-stricken and oppressed, the people never die.

On the other hand, it is the well-nigh unanimous sentiment of travellers and historians that they are capable of the highest civilization and intellectual culture. A people who risked all the horrors of a mediæval rebellion—the knout, the *oubliettes* and the mines of Siberia—to save their beards from the sacrilegious hands of that iconoclast Peter the Great, or to prevent a change in the sign of the cross, will not suffer by comparison with those who gave \$150,000,000, 400,000 lives, and risked a traitor's death to save a three cent tax on tea. Brave, industrious, patient, self-respecting, self-sacrificing and democratic; loving their *mir*, their country and their Czar with a love that passeth knowledge; blindly faithful to one form of fatalism, that whatever the Czar decrees is for the best; rejecting with alarm the proposal of the bureaucracy to limit the power of the autocracy, preferring the kindly rule of the latter to the tyranny of the former; rising in mass to reject civil freedom from the hand of Napoleon, and accepting death to save a country that offered no other reward than the mines of Siberia or the *oubliettes* of the Bastille of Peter Paul—this people presents a spectacle at once sad and awe inspiring. That they are perfectly capable of managing their own political and civil affairs, no student of the Village Community or Communism in general will deny. As members of the *mir* from a time beyond which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, the peasants have managed the land, the forests, the fisheries, the renting of the public buildings, the distribution of taxes and the elections of the executive and the judges of the Volost.

Under these circumstances there is but one solution of the problem of Russia's political future, one method of closing the chasm between the civilization of Russia and that of the rest of Europe. The people and the Czar must unite to throw off this incubus—this drag on the wheels of progress. History furnishes innumerable examples of such a coalition. Russia herself has once witnessed the abolition of the political privileges of a class by the combined efforts of Czar and people, when the Boyards attempted to impose restrictions upon the Romanoffs. The sentiment of democratic equality

inclines them to hate all politically privileged classes and to support the one supreme power which is equally above all.

But to this union there are on the part of the people two obstacles, and these it has ever been the aim of the Czars to overcome and that of the bureaucracy to uphold: First, the non-ownership of the land, and secondly, the want of elementary and professional education. That the peasants' cry, "*My vashi zemlia nasha!*" ("we are yours but the land is ours"), will be answered, that enlightenment will become general, that the supremacy of the people must come—is but the necessary conclusion of the logic of events. History is a science and evolution a fact.

In view of these facts we cannot but agree with the dicta of all writers, Russian and foreign, that the Czar and the people are the chief living organic forces in Russian society. The gradual elevation of the people, through the continued efforts of the Czars, notwithstanding the most determined bureaucratic opposition, is the undoubted precursor of a sudden and perhaps violent union of these elements, in a constitutional monarchy by which all other factions and parties shall be ground to powder.

ARNOLD WATSON SHERMAN.

## TWO REPUBLICS OR ONE ?

A SHORT time ago a merchant in San Francisco posted the following proclamation in front of his store :

### "CITIZENS, READ THIS !

"Eastern manufacturers are starving your industrial classes and bankrupting our business men. The crisis cannot be kept up much longer. Our only relief is a Pacific republic. We tax certain foreign goods. Why not protect ourselves against the East !"

It is easy enough to understand that a sentiment such as is here expressed becomes exaggerated in its importance through the publicity given to it by the newspapers. One wonders, however, whether it does not contain the germ of prophecy. In other words, will the time ever come when the United States will divide itself peacefully into two republics, with the Mississippi river as the natural line of separation ?

The question is not altogether new. Frequently, as the debates in Congress amply attest, the possibility of a western republic has been intimated. It has been more of a warning than a threat. No one has ever believed that such bisection would come in this generation or the next. Nobody wants it to come at all. Against the working of natural forces, however, human desires are proverbially weak and it may be that these forces will in themselves work out an inevitable destiny.

At present there is little affinity between the East and the West. The two sections are apart on almost every vital principle. This is so evident in the one instance of money that no argument is needed. One has but to refer to the numerous and bitter struggles in the last Congress to note how party lines can be obliterated and sectional lines be drawn. The East is the center of the money power, the home of the holder of the mortgage and of the bond. The West is bending under a burden of debt, suspicious of financial bondage, anxious for a freer and more elastic currency. The East abhors silver as a money metal and clamors for the further appreciation of an already scant supply of gold. The West wants silver recognized, and believes that in no